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Message Text

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46
ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-06 INR-07

LAB-03 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AID-05 IO-10 PC-04 AGR-10

INT-05 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 DRC-01 /121 W
---------- 036503
R 181230Z OCT 74
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4086
INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
AMEMBASY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0649

E.O.11652:N/A
TAGS :PINT,SFOR,ELAB,SF
SUBJ : SAG MOVES TO ABOLISH 'SLAVE LABOR LAWS'
REF :CAPE TOWN --93

BEGIN SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO ABOLISH ALL NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL'MASTER AND SERVANT LAWS' WHICH HAVE BEEN INTERNATIONALLY VILIFIED AS PROMOTING 'SLAVE LABOR.' LEGISLATIONG,WHICH HAS BEEN WELL-RECEIVED AND IS ASSURED OF PASSAGE, SEEN AS SAG RESPONSE TO US UNITED MINE WORKERS LAW SUIT AND DIFFICULTY SA MINES MAY BE ENCOUNTERING IN RECRUITING FOREIGN BLACKS. END SUMMARY.

1. ONE PROVISION OF OMNIBUS SECOND GENERAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL INTRODUCED IN PARLIAMENT OCOTBER 15 BY MINJUSTICE KRUGER WILL
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ABOLISH ALL NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL 'MASTER AND SERVANT

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LAWS' AND REPEAL THOSE PORTIONS OF 1964 BANTU LABOR ACT
WHICH PROVIDE PENAL SANCTIONS FOR FAILURE OF BLACK EMPLOYEES
TO ABIDE BY TERMS OF LABOR CONTRACTS(REFAIR).

2. MANY OF PROVINCIAL LAWS TO BE ABOLISHED DATE FROM
MID 19TH CENTURY. MOST RECENT DOMESTIC OPPOSITION TO 'MASTER
AND SERVANT' LAWS WAS VOICED BY MEMBERS OF COLORED
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL WHO CALLED ON MINLABOR LAST MONTH TO
URGE REPEAL OF MEASURES WHICH THEY SAID REDUCED COLORED FARM
WORKER TO 'STATUS OF A SERF'.

3. DESPITE DOMESTIC CRITICISM OF THESE LAWS, MOST OBSERVERS
VIEW GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE TO REPEAL THEM AS RESPONSE TO
INTERNATIONAL EVENTS. SPECIFICALLY NOTED IS CURRENT US
LITIGATION INSTITUTED BY UNITED MINE WORKERS OF ALABAMA TO
BLOCK IMPORTATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN COAL ON BASIS THAT
PROVISIONS OF 1964 BANTU LABOR ACT PROMOTE WORK CONDITIONS
TANTAMOUNT TO'SLAVE LABOR'. IN ADDITION, DIFFICULTY SA IS
SAID TO BE ENCOUNTERING IN RECRUITING MINEWORKERS IN
NEIGHBORING AFRICAN STATES (NOTABLE MALAWU) COULD BE FACTOR
IN GOVERNMENT'S MOVE TO REPEAL LAWS.

4. PROPOSED LEGISLATIONG WIDELY HAILED BY ALL POLITICAL
PARTIES AND IS ASSURED PASSAGE. EVEN NORMALLY CRITICAL
ENGLISH-LEANGUAGE PRESS HAS WAXED RHAPSODIC OVER IT.
RAND DAILY MAIL, FOR INSTANCE, CALLS IT 'ONE OF THE MOST
ENLIGHTENED LEGISLATIVE MOVES IN YEARS.'

COMMENT: REMOVAL OF THESE ANTIQUATED AND INHERENTLY
UNJUST LASW IS NOTEWORTHY AND COMMENDABLE,REGARDLESS OF SAG'S
MOTIVATION. HOWEVER, THEIR REPEAL,IN AND OF ITSELF, WILL
DO LITTLE TO AID SOUTH AFRICA'S LOW-PAID FARM WORKERS AND DOMESTIC
SERVANTS WHO STILL REMAIN UNCOVERED BY PROTECTION
OFFERED TO INDUSTRIAL LABORERS. HECKLING WHICH PROGRESSIVE
PARTY MP HELEN SUZMAN RECEIVED OCTOBER 16 FROM GOVERNMENT
AND SOME OPPOSITION UNITED IARTY PARLIAMENTARIANS DURING HER
ANNUAL CONDEMNATION OF FARM LADOR CONDITIONS INDICATES THAT,
ALTHOUGH SOME BLATANTLY OBSOLETE AND OBNOXIOUS LAWS
ARE DUE TO FALL BY WAYSIDE, REAL JUSTICE FOR LOWEST PAID
BLACK WAGE EARNERS STILL FAR IN FUTURE.
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6. POUCHING COPY OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO AF/S.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SLAVERY, LABOR LAW
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974CAPET00649
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740297-0545
From: CAPE TOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741037/aaaabewm.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: APE TOWN --93
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinjw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 MAR 2002 by chappeld>; APPROVED <07 FEB 2003 by martinjw>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: : SAG MOVES TO ABOLISH 'SLAVE LABOR LAWS'
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, ELAB, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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